

Support of Bill 5357

My name is Anne Nutt. I currently teach junior high school at the American School for the Deaf. Though the majority of my 26 year career has been at the American School for the Deaf, I have taught deaf and hard-of-hearing students in other programs and a variety of settings.

I am testifying in support of Bill 5357, to insure all deaf or hard-of-hearing children have access to language and communication in an educational setting that will best serve that individual child.

The point I want to focus on is the significance of the exposure to **language**. Children **MUST** have access to various forms of communication from an early age. Without exposure to language that is meaningful to them, they face challenges achieving academically and of making sense of the world.

There have been many times when a new student is placed in my classroom and I find them significantly delayed in all academic areas. Each year that they miss crucial exposure to and interaction with meaningful language, they fall further and further behind. If they are 10 or 12 years old (or older) when they enter a program that finally meets **THEIR** language and communication needs, imagine how much they have missed! They need to **BEGIN** their education in an environment that is communicatively fully accessible.

That time of missed opportunities to participate, inquire, explore, and share their opinions cannot be given back. They are constantly challenged to catch up. Unfortunately, few of them ever do. That is reflected in the statistics recently reported in the Hartford Courant; 71 percent of children with hearing disabilities failed to reach the state goal in Connecticut Mastery Tests in 2011 compared to 35.3 percent of hearing children; in reading, 75.2 percent of children with hearing disabilities failed to reach goal compared to 35.7 percent of hearing children; 81.6 percent failed to meet state goals in the CAPT math tests, compared to 53.9 percent of hearing students. In reading, 75.5 percent failed to meet goals, compared to 58.3 percent. I have seen this disparity first hand.

As an educator of the Deaf, and on behalf of the deaf and hard-of-hearing children in the state of Connecticut, I strongly support Bill 5357 and urge you to vote in support of it.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on its behalf.